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Viewing cable 09ATHENS240, MFA PRESSES U.S. TO WITHDRAW FROM NAVAL EXERCISE

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Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09ATHENS240	2009-02-24 05:29	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Athens

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.tanea.gr>

VZCZCXYZ0002
OO RUEHWEB

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O 240529Z FEB 09
FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 000240

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/23/2019

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SUBJECT: MFA PRESSES U.S. TO WITHDRAW FROM NAVAL EXERCISE

REF: A) ANKARA 278 B) GOODMAN-SPECKHARD E-MAIL
2/21/2009

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DAN SPECKHARD. REASON: 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY AND COMMENT: On February 23, MFA Secretary General Agathocles summoned Ambassador Speckhard to tell him that, in the GOG's view, the U.S. should not to participate in the upcoming naval exercise "Egemen." Non-participation would send an important signal to Turkey that it needed to work with Greece to work through Aegean issues. The two countries needed to get back to resolving their differences through negotiations which had become dormant following the failure of the Annan plan in 2004. Ambassador Speckhard underscored that it was normal for the U.S. to participate in multilateral exercises and the Greeks should not see this as an effort to take sides in Aegean disputes. The U.S. respected Greece's sovereign territory and would do so in any exercise we were involved in. The Ambassador urged the GOG to raise its concerns directly with the exercise co-planners, Turkey and the UK. Ambassador Speckhard urged Agathocles not to define "success" as U.S. non-participation; rather, success should be defined as insuring that Greece's legitimate concerns were addressed. Agathocles agreed.

12. (C) Agathocles' swift acceptance of our definition of success suggests that, by getting the details right, they would have no objection to the exercise going ahead. We continue to believe that, on SAR, it would be a mistake to exercise a procedure that would undermine the principle of coordination that is important in real cases. While we understand the exigencies of military planning, we should ensure that the details are in place and in line with our principles -- even if it were to delay the exercise until all the fine points are worked out. We agree with Ankara that cancellation would only heighten tensions in the Aegean. END SUMMARY AND COMMENT.

GREECE URGES U.S. WITHDRAWAL FROM EGEMEN . . .

3.. (C) Agathocles avoided technical details ("which you know very well"), focusing instead on the exercise's political impact. He argued that Turkey was taking the opportunity to get the U.S. and others involved in a dispute over sovereignty in the Aegean. There had been little progress on these issues, and this exercise would only make it harder in future. As it was not a NATO exercise, he urged the U.S., UK, and Dutch not to participate. Their withdrawal would send a signal to Turkey that it needed to discuss Aegean issues with the GOG. He bemoaned the fact that the progress made in the past was all but halted following the failed Annan effort in Cyprus in 2004. Agathocles noted that he had also called the UK and Dutch ambassadors and would see them later in the day.

. . . BUT AGREES THAT THE GOAL IS GETTING THE KEY ISSUES RIGHT

14. (C) Ambassador Speckhard relayed ref b points, stressing respect for Greece's sovereign territory and that Greece's concerns were most appropriately raised with the exercise's co-planners, Turkey and the UK. He urged Agathocles not to create a scenario where anything short of cancellation or withdrawal was perceived as a GOG failure. It would be more productive to work with the exercise planners to ensure that Greece's two key concerns with the exercise -- sovereignty and SAR issues -- were addressed. That might mean delaying the start of the exercise until the details were right. Cancelling altogether could simply heighten tensions, and have a destabilizing effect in the Aegean.

15. (C) Agathocles took the point, stressing the importance of not violating Greek sovereignty or moving forward with the SAR portion of the exercise without coordination with Greece given its FIR responsibility. He reiterated the need to "send a signal" to Turkey that Greece was prepared to negotiate in a serious way. If things went on as they were, it would be difficult for Greece to take a positive approach to EU decisions on Turkey's accession at the end of the year. On the SAR portion of the exercise, Agathocles questioned whether a U.S. helicopter was involved, which would be a problem. Ambassador Speckhard agreed to check, but thought no U.S. air assets were involved. Agathocles seemed resigned

to Turkish violations of the disputed 6-10 nm Greek definition of their airspace, but would be more upset if other allies took the opportunity of this exercise to reinforce differences on this point.

¶6. (C) Ambassador Speckhard again urged Agathocles not to have "non-participation" by the U.S. be the goal. The goal should be to get the details of the exercise right. Agathocles agreed, and believed he could convince Bakoyiannis that they would have achieved "success" if the exercise respected Greece's territorial integrity and coordinated appropriately on SAR/FIR issues.

MCCARTHY